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Between Her and Me

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My mom hands me a two-sided razor blade, rests her calves on the living room carpet waiting as I carve the callous under her foot to a pallid bulb burning the night hours, and I tell her that today I studied a Rembrandt in printmaking class, smelled copper and thought of her—reminded of steel machines jetting Smithsonian flyers as we bundled them with rubber bands one summer; where this morning she left behind another 8 hours to work on General Electric, AT&T, Evergreen letters assembled into postal sacks for $10 an hour so she can afford rice, poultry, and help with my tuition—praying that I might speak an unbroken English tongue and never return to the factory. Her spine curls forward as she leans in closer and hair falls like wine poured down her shoulders in silver and black—it doesn’t hurt anymore, she says, do my left foot.